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WHA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VALENZUELA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2020
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DELIVERS TOUGH MESSAGE TO DE FACTO FM
CARLOS LOPEZ CONTRERAS

REF: A. KELLY EMAIL 1/8/10
[1](#)B. VALENZUELA-RESTREPO-KELLY-REYNOSO-LLORENS TELCON
1/7/10

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reason 1.4 (B and D)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: The Ambassador met with Honduran de facto regime foreign minister Carlos Lopez Contreras at the home of a mutual friend January 10 to deliver a firm message from Washington regarding the lack of progress by the de facto regime and the negative public and private statements made by de facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti in his January 6 meeting with Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) Craig Kelly and afterward. The Ambassador delivered the points listed in Ref A. Lopez explained the meeting with PDAS Kelly had not gone according to plan, which was for Micheletti to remain quiet and allow Lopez to speak for the regime. He said despite the meeting not going well, the regime was discussing a response and Lopez asked to be able to deliver it to the Ambassador in person to ensure it was conveyed clearly. Lopez and the Ambassador also discussed the status of a safe departure from the country by President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya, and the challenges the Lobo administration faced to resume normal diplomatic relations following inauguration. End summary.

Micheletti's Comments and the U.S. Message

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Per instructions from Washington (Refs A and B), the Ambassador met with de facto regime foreign minister Carlos Lopez Contreras on the evening of January 10 at the private residence of a mutual friend. The Ambassador and Lopez met one-on-one, and held a frank but cordial discussion.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) The Ambassador delivered the points from Ref A, informing Lopez that the reaction in the USG at the highest levels was very negative regarding de facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti's private and public statements made both during and following his January 6 meeting with PDAS Kelly and the Ambassador. He noted some of Micheletti's most outrageous assertions included a claim that the United States "abandoned" Honduras for six months; that the U.S. visa policy was an insult ("groseria" in Spanish); that the USG essentially tried to bribe Micheletti to leave office; that the United States was guilty of crude interventionism; and that the USG was asking him to violate Honduran law.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) Lopez expressed his appreciation to the Ambassador for meeting with him in person so he could receive the message directly. Lopez noted that the January 6 meeting had not gone as the Micheletti team had planned. He said in advance of the meeting, they had agreed Micheletti would remain in listening mode, and allow Lopez to speak for the

regime, so they could take in the USG message from PDAS Kelly and discuss a response afterward. Lopez noted that Micheletti was a temperamental man, and though he had remained quiet for the first half hour, had been unable to contain himself any further. Lopez also noted that there had been too many people present in the meeting. (Note: accompanying Micheletti and Lopez in the meeting were Casco, regime defense minister Sevilla, Micheletti advisors Marcia Villeda and Leonardo Villeda, and regime information minister Zepeda. End Note.) Lopez said that despite Micheletti's undiplomatic response, the Micheletti team received the U.S. message, and would meet on January 11 to determine its formal response.

15. (S/NF) Lopez acknowledged that Micheletti needed to make some gesture, such as an informal leave of absence to give space for the Lobo transition team to begin rebuilding international relations ahead of the inauguration and accommodate the United States in its need to uphold principles of democracy. He said some progress had already been made within the Micheletti team on this issue. Lopez explained Micheletti was insisting everything be done in accordance with Honduran law, and that Micheletti was obligated to give a state of the nation address to the newly-inaugurated National Congress on January 25, at which time he would turn in the presidential sash for the President of Congress to confer on Lobo on January 27. Lopez reiterated that Micheletti would not attend the January 27 Presidential inauguration. The Ambassador noted that a reappearance by Micheletti on January 25 would raise questions in the United States and the international community on the seriousness of Micheletti's absence and said he understood that Honduran law allowed for the President to

send a final statement to Congress in written form, delivered by a proxy official, instead of making a speech.

16. (S/NF) Lopez said that once the regime had reached a final decision, he wanted to deliver the message in-person to the Ambassador, not to negotiate, but to make certain the response was presented clearly and faithfully. The Ambassador agreed to this request.

Other Topics: Zelaya, Lobo's Diplomatic Challenge

17. (S/NF) President Zelaya and the Prospects for Departure: Lopez blamed Zelaya and the Mexican Government for the failed efforts to find suitable, safe passage for Zelaya out of Honduras on December 9, 2009. He said that the Mexicans had insisted Zelaya be treated as a head of state, and when difficulties arose in resolving the final details, Zelaya made public statements that scuttled the process. Lopez stated the de facto regime was still willing to allow Zelaya to depart, if they received a formal request from the government of a non-contiguous country. Both the Ambassador and Lopez agreed, however, that Zelaya was not likely to depart until after the January 27 inauguration.

18. (S/NF) Lobo's Diplomatic Challenge: Lopez informed the Ambassador that the Honduran foreign policy apparatus was in a shambles because of the protracted political crisis. He said that the professional foreign service ranks were split into pro-Zelaya and pro-de facto regime camps, and that many overseas missions were on the verge of being shut down as a result of the schism and nonpayment of bills. He noted that the passport machines had gone missing in some European posts, and many local staff had been lost because salaries were not being paid. Lopez said that this internal schism coupled with the fact that Honduras had no formal foreign relations meant the Lobo administration would face a Herculean task to resume normal diplomatic operations. The Ambassador acknowledged the challenge ahead, and said that for the United States, it was extremely important that the transition be accomplished as smoothly as possible, with the three sides -- de facto regime, Zelaya administration and new Lobo transition team -- doing all they could to make

resumption of operations possible. The Ambassador said he had spoken with Zelaya's Ambassador to the United States, Enrique Reina, on this matter and Reina had in turn been in communication with former president Maduro, Lobo's foreign policy transition team leader.

LLORENS